

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-20 (canceled)

21 (Previously presented): A method for drying or heat treating a web-formed material having a width, the method comprising:

- transporting the web-formed material, in contact with a gas-permeable dryer screen, through a drying plant in a direction of transport;

- establishing high and low-pressure sides of the web-formed material by blowing a hot process air against the web-formed material and drawing the process air through the web-formed material, to dry said material;

- mixing water leaving the web-formed material with the process air;

- discharging a first portion of the mixed water and process air as exhaust air and replacing the exhaust air with a corresponding portion of supply air with a low water content;

- recirculating a second portion of the mixed water and process air;

- generating a pressure drop in a zone disposed proximate to the high-pressure side of the web-formed material, the zone extending substantially the width of the web-formed material; and

- distributing the process air in a region upstream of the pressure-drop zone with a distribution member, the distribution member

- forming a first flow of process air having a width extending substantially across the width of the web-formed material and a length in the direction of transport of the web-formed material, the length of the first flow of process air being smaller than the width of the first flow of process air, the first flow of process air having a direction of flow substantially perpendicular to the surface of the web-formed material,

- dividing the first flow of process air into a plurality of jets directed substantially in a plane defined by the direction of transport and the normal direction of the web-

formed material, said jets being distributed over substantially an angular region facing the web-formed material, and

mixing the jets with one another again into a second flow of process air, the second flow of process air being conducted through the pressure-drop zone and then against and through the web-formed material lying on the gas-permeable dryer screen.

22 (Previously presented): The method of claim 21 wherein dividing the first flow of process air includes directing substantially all of the jets such that the jet paths do not intersect one another.

23 (Previously presented): The method of claim 22 wherein the jets are substantially isotropically outwardly-directed.

24 (Previously presented): The method of claim 22 wherein the jets are section by section, directed in the same direction.

25 (Previously presented): The method of claim 21 wherein dividing the first flow of process air includes directing the jets such that the angular difference between two jets increases with the distance between the jets measured in the direction of transport of the web-formed material.

26 (Previously presented): The method of claim 21 wherein dividing the first flow of process air includes directing the jets such that the jets in a central section are antiparallel to a normal to the web-formed material and jets in any other sections exhibit deviating directions with a successively increasing angle to the jets in the central section.

27 (Previously presented): The method of claim 22 wherein the first flow of process air is divided such that a ratio of the total cross-section area of the jets to the total area is lower in a central portion, where the direction of the jets is substantially perpendicular to the web-

formed material, than at the sides, where the direction of the jets lies substantially in the plane of the web-formed material.

28 (Previously presented): The method of claim 22 wherein dividing the first flow of process air includes forming the jets with an substantially circular cross section.

29 (Previously presented): The method of claim 28 wherein the jets are directed a certain distance after the first flow has been divided.

Claims 30-43 (Canceled)